

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT Council News

"Assisting Schools Statewide"



Fall 2006

Student Health and Fitness Act Impacts 2006 - 2007 School Year

by Dr. Richard Hohn

The Student Health and Fitness Act of 2005 was designed to positively affect the physical activity (PA), health-related fitness and nutrition habits of the children and youth of South Carolina.

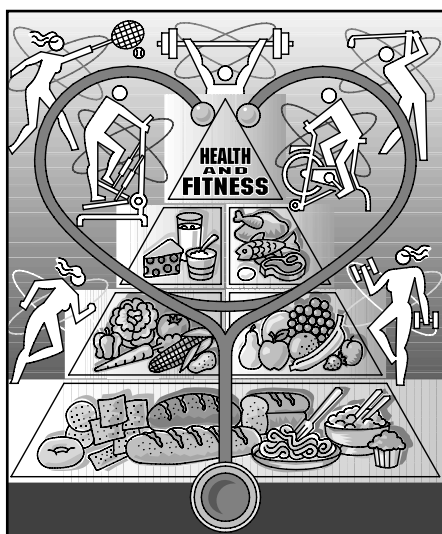
Hailed as model legislation by many other states, the bill enjoyed bipartisan support in the SC House and Senate. Legislators and the South Carolina State Department of Education worked together to craft a bill that would address the escalating obesity-related health problems among South Carolina's schoolchildren.

Impetus for the bill came from key legislators who cited several reasons for their concern:

- South Carolina ranks 10th in the US in the number of overweight and obese people.
- The number of overweight children in SC has tripled since the 1960's.
- South Carolina ranks first in the number of strokes, third in the number of incidences of heart disease and 10th in the number of individuals affected by diabetes.
- Twenty-five percent of children ages 5 to 10 have high blood pressure or other early warning signs of heart disease.
- Regular physical activity has been proven to improve strength and endurance, control body weight, build healthy bones and muscles, and reduce anxiety and stress.
- Research shows a clear relationship

between academic achievement and physical fitness.

- For the first time in 100 years, national reports show that the current generation of children will have a shorter life expectancy than the previous generation because of a sedentary lifestyle.



Key components of the Student Health and Fitness Act deal with physical activity, physical education and assessment of physical education programs relative to the SC Physical Education Curriculum Standards. It should be noted that the physical education time standards set by the law deal specifically with elementary schools and do not address time needed for middle and high school physical education instruction.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The law establishes ninety minutes a week of physical activity for elementary students in school year 2006-2007. A teacher designated as Physical Activity Director for the school will be provided with the training necessary to carry out mandated responsibilities. Documentation must be submitted to the State Department of Education regarding the amount of PA received by each child. In the 2008-2009

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DHEC Program Rewards Youth Health Projects

As part of the Department of Health and Environmental Control's mission to protect and promote the health of the public and environment, DHEC is sponsoring the All-Health Team, a program to recognize and reward youth throughout South Carolina for outstanding efforts to promote preventive health. Monthly winners will receive \$500 to further their project, a thirty-second television spot on WIS-TV 10 that will highlight their work, an All-Health Team T-shirt and gear, and coverage on the All-Health Team website. Three annual winners will receive \$5000 for first place, \$3000 for second place, and \$2000 for third place.

Through a public-private partnership consisting of DHEC, WIS-TV and Lexington Medical Center, each month during the school year an individual or group of youth are named to the All-Health Team. Each May the partnership will select three annual winners from the group of monthly winners. Youth from kindergarten through

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Mark Your Calendar!



SC-SIC has responded to your requests for training sessions on "The Basics" of being an SIC member by scheduling nine trainings in local areas around the state along with the annual conference in Columbia. And be sure to attend Day at the Capitol for an opportunity to make your voice heard at the statehouse. Watch for updates on the website and in future issues of *Council News*.

SIC FALL TRAINING SCHEDULE

No registration required - attend at the location of your choice!

October 19	Greenville	Woodmont High School 2831 W. Georgia Rd Piedmont, SC 29673 864-355-8600	4:15-6:00 PM
October 16	Greenwood	Piedmont Tech 620 N. Emerald Rd. Greenwood, SC 29646 864-941-8324	6:30-8:00 PM
October 23	Beaufort	Palmetto Electric Co-op One Cooperative Way Hardeeville, SC 29927 843-208-5551	7:00-8:30 PM
October 24	Rock Hill	Flexible Learning Center 1234 Flint Street Ext. Rock Hill, SC 29730 803-981-1928	7:00-8:30 PM
October 26	Columbia	SCEA Building 421 Zimacrest Dr. Columbia, SC 29210 803-772-6553	7:00-8:30 PM
October 30	Florence	Poynor Center 301 S. Dargan St. Florence, SC 29506 843-664-8152	6:30-8:00 PM
November 9	Aiken	Aiken Electric Co-op 2790 Wagener Rd. Aiken, SC 29802 800-922-1262	6:30-8:30 PM
November 14	Anderson	Tri-County Tech 7900 Hwy 76 Piedmont, SC 29670 864-646-8361	6:30-8:30 PM
TBA	Charleston	TBA	TBA

SIC EVENTS

Registration required - contact SC-SIC offices

February 27, 2007	Day at the Capitol	Columbia Marriott 803-771-7000	TBA
March 10, 2007	Columbia SIC Annual Conference	Columbia Conference Center 169 Laurelhurst Ave. Columbia, SC 29210 803-772-9811	TBA



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POINT OF VIEW

Opinion and Commentary

Understanding H.4449 - Property Tax Reform Legislation

by Bob Davis, Guest Columnist

Once the new property tax reform legislation takes effect, you could easily wonder how a proclaimed "solution" so rapidly brought on another round of problems.

The report issued by the SC Legislature on the bill is 48 pages long and even the experts are still trying to understand it all! However, there are some things we do know. The new law eliminates property taxes for school operations. That amounts to about 50-60% of the average homeowners' bill that will be due on or before January 15, 2008. It also lowers the sales tax on unprepared food from 5% to 3% effective October 1, 2006. That's the good news for homeowners and grocery shoppers.

The bad news is that, as of June 1, 2007, state sales taxes on items other than groceries will rise to 6 cents on the dollar, a 20% increase. Some SC counties have passed their own sales tax increases, so sales tax in those counties will be even higher. The other bad news is that, if you itemize your property tax deduction on your state and federal income tax return, you just lost that deduction. An additional concern is that the new law replaces education funding through property taxes on homes with sales taxes. Sales taxes are, and have been, inherently less stable and reliable than property taxes. The hardship caused by three years of multiple mid-year state budget cuts after the September 11 attacks devastated our economy should still be fresh in everyone's mind.

Depending on your personal spending patterns, the Property Tax Reform legislation may increase or decrease the total amount you pay in state taxes. If you are low-income and do not own real estate, the more likely it is that your total tax bill just increased. Because sales taxes are regressive in nature, (i.e., the poor spend a greater percentage of their income on sales taxes), it is clear that the greatest benefit of this new law is derived by the upper-income, property-owning segment of the population.



The impact on school district funding and local government is significant. South Carolina is a "Home Rule" state, where certain governing powers are delegated from the state to local governments. This empowers the local governments to make specific decisions, such as how local taxes are levied to fund education. Under H.4449, Home Rule and local control are virtually gone.

The legislature has placed a cap on how much local government, except in extraordinary circumstances, may increase funding through the imposition of additional taxes. The formula the legislature used to determine the new cap allows for the millage to be increased by the consumer price index plus the population growth, which averages out to be about 4.5%. ("Millage" is a dollar amount for every \$1000 dollars worth of property.) Under the system that is being replaced, (known as "Maintenance of Effort"), a school district funding increase was required for student growth plus inflation. That generally equaled about 9%. The question is: "Will an average 4.5% increase in millage provide enough dollars to cover the growth?" The answer is that, historically, Maintenance of Effort has been insufficient to fund growth. If a 9% increase cannot cover a district's

growth, it is doubtful that a 4.5% millage increase will.

Cash flow is also a significant concern for school district finance officials. The old law required 90% of the state property tax relief funds to be paid to the districts on December 1. The new law states that revenue will be paid to school districts "on or after January 1." How soon after January 1 is open to question. This will undoubtedly result in more and more school districts borrowing money and thus incurring additional interest costs, thereby diverting funds from operations.

South Carolina's balanced tax structure of property, sales, income, and fees has been praised across our country by economists of every stripe. Immediately following the enactment of the new law, a "Negative Outlook" by Wall Street's Moody's Investor Services was issued for South Carolina's school districts. This will result in increased interest cost for our school districts.

H.4449 is the most sweeping change in over three decades to the way K-12 public education in our state is funded. Is the new law good news for homeowners? The answer is an unqualified "yes." Is the new law bad for taxpayers in general and for the funding of public K-12 education? Unfortunately, the answer is also an unqualified "yes." If a war existed between homeowners and schools, then clearly that war is over. It has been replaced by a new war between schools and other local government-funded operations such as sheriff's departments, fire departments, public libraries, and recreation commissions. These competing demands will now struggle over a limited pool of dollars.

The Legislature reconvenes in January 2007. The opportunity exists to revise this vastly flawed piece of legislation. Please speak up and express your views.

Bob Davis is Chief Financial Officer for Richland School District 2. He was SCASA's 2005-2006 District-Level Administrator of the Year.

SIC ACTION TIMELINE



August / September

- Plan election procedures, date and event with principal
- Convene new SIC, distribute SIC Handbook, conduct new member orientation
- Elect officers and make committee assignments related to school improvement plan
- If available, collect and send SIC membership information to district office

October

- Complete SIC elections by October 15; send membership information to district office
- Committees should identify areas of plan to be monitored and organize for action
- Review school data such as surveys, test scores, demographics and budget
- Attend regional SIC conference
- Apply for Riley Award

November / December

- Review data from School Report Card; determine how it relates to school improvement plan
- Committees continue to monitor implementation of plan strategies

"DHEC Promotes All-Health Team"

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twelfth grade are eligible to enter as an individual or team. A team may represent a school, church, or community organization. Youth and their leaders are asked to complete and submit an All-Health Team application, available through the All-Health Team website and by telephone or email request. Ways to promote preventive health include:

- **Hands-on activities** (building and promoting a walking trail)
- **Research** (test and increase community knowledge of a health issue)
- **Advocacy** (promoting healthier food choices or healthier policies)

To learn more about the All-Health Team and its winners, visit the DHEC website www.scdhec.gov/allhealth. If you have any questions, please call Joann Moton-Minder at 803-545-4501 or e-mail minderjm@scdhec.sc.gov.

Council News - Fall 2006

SC-SIC Welcomes New Board Member

SC School Improvement Council Board of Trustees Chair Nell Stewart is pleased to announce the appointment of Carlos Primus to the board. Mr. Primus is an experienced SIC member and former chair of the A.J. Lewis-Greenview Elementary School SIC, the 2005 Riley Award winner. He is very active in public education, serving as coordinator of the Lunch Buddies Program and the Parental Involvement Program at St. Andrews Middle School, a member of Richland School District One's Government Relations Committee, and as a member of Colonial Life's Core Planning Team for the High Performance Business Partnership with St. Andrews Middle School. He was also nominated for Colonial Life's Frank Sumner Smith Jr. Volunteer of the Year Award. Mr. Primus is employed with Colonial Supplemental Insurance of Columbia, SC. He and his wife Meredeith are the parents of two daughters.



Carlos Primus



SC to Spend Millions on New School Buses

The SC General Assembly has appropriated \$36 million dollars to allow the State Department of Education to replace nearly all of its 22 and 23 year old buses from the 1984 and 1985 model years. The new buses, to be delivered in November, represent SC's first major school bus purchase in 10 years.

Of the 630 buses ordered, 520 will be 65-passenger regular route buses (\$54,385 each) and 110 will be special 35-passenger buses fitted with seatbelts and wheelchair lifts (\$73,475 each).

For the past 10 years, South Carolina has purchased an average of about 90 new buses per year, roughly equivalent to a 62-year replacement cycle. During that time, the average age of a South Carolina school bus has climbed from 7.5 years in 1996 to nearly 14 years today. The 640 new buses will improve that average age to 12.5.

Three members of the South Carolina House of Representatives (Ronnie Townsend, Ken Clark and John Scott) sponsored a bill in the just-ended session of the General Assembly that would have committed South Carolina to a 12 year replacement cycle for school buses. The House approved the bill, but the Senate did not pass it.

Both a Legislative Audit Council report and an independent consultant have called for South Carolina to budget for annual bus purchases. The Education Department favors a system that would retire school buses after they are 12 years old or have more than 250,000 miles on their odometers.

"From a business perspective, it's simply not as cost-effective to buy buses in fits and starts," said SC Education Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum. "There is no doubt that an annual replacement cycle is our most cost-effective option, and I firmly believe that the General Assembly should commit itself to that."

More than half of South Carolina's 670,000 public school students ride a bus to or from school each day.

-adapted from SC Dept. of Education website, <http://ed.sc.gov/>

WORDS TO THINK ABOUT...

*"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
Martin Luther King, Jr.*

More Facts to Belie Myth that Schools are Beyond Repair

The following editorial appeared in the July 5, 2006 edition of *The State* newspaper. Reprinted with permission.



The politicians have been so busy arguing over whether to give up on our public schools that most people failed to take proper note of how busy those schools have been climbing to the top of some pretty impressive national rankings.

In the past few weeks alone:

South Carolina was one of five singled out by the U.S. Department of Education for improvement on the science portion of the only test considered an accurate national comparison of academic performance.

We were one of just eight states to receive an "A" from a prominent pro-voucher education research institute for our approach to teaching world history.

Critics say improvement doesn't matter as long as our absolute scores don't lead the nation — which is sort of like telling your boss you don't want that 50 percent raise if you'll still make less than he does. The fact is that the only way to reach your goal is to

consistently outperform the competition. And we're doing that.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires states to administer the National Assessment of Education Progress to fourth- and eighth-graders. The science scores released last month show our fourth-graders led the nation in improvement from 2000 to 2005. Our eighth-graders showed less spectacular improvement, but still enough to make South Carolina one of just five states that improved in both grades — and enough to bring our overall scores up to the national average.

Results released last fall showed our students moved above the national average in math. (We were slightly below the national average in reading, the only other subject for which comparisons are available.)

We're even making progress on the largely meaningless comparison that critics love to make: Our SAT scores have increased 42 points in the past seven years, while the national average went up just 11 points.

Critics also miss the mark when they downplay the high marks we keep receiving for our curricula and our testing systems, arguing that it doesn't matter what you teach if kids don't learn it. That's true, even though it ignores that our kids are learning what we're teaching them now that we've figured

out what to teach them. But here's the flip side: It does no good for kids to learn everything you ask them to learn if you don't ask enough of them, or if you teach them the wrong things.

When the "schools are failing" folks point to states that produce better test scores, they ignore the fact that those states ask far less of their kids than we do. That's not just our view. That's the conclusion of pretty much every legitimate study that reviews what states teach and test — from the left, the right and down the middle.

The Fordham Foundation, which praised our world history standards, also ranked our science standards fourth-best in the nation. And at least seven independent studies have rated our state's overall academic standards among the nation's best. Most recently, the Education Trust said South Carolina and Maine have the nation's most rigorous academic standards, and the Hoover Institution's "Education Next" journal said our state, Maine and Massachusetts had the toughest.

Have we done as much as we need to? Absolutely not; for one thing, we haven't figured out how to improve our shameful dropout rate. But anyone who suggests that we are hopelessly mired in last place is ignoring the clear reality. And anyone who thinks we need to throw out the accountability system that is so clearly getting the job done is simply living in a fantasy land.

"Student Health and Fitness Act Impacts School Year"

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school year, the amount of PA will drop to sixty minutes a week while the physical education time will increase to ninety minutes a week.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Sixty minutes of physical education with a certified physical education teacher are required for the 2006-2007 school year along with the mandatory ninety minutes of PA. As previously stated, in 2008-2009 the physical education time will increase to ninety minutes per week as the PA time is reduced to sixty minutes.

ASSESSMENT

In order to document the effectiveness of the program in meeting the standards prescribed by the SC Physical Education Curriculum Standards, each year one-third of the state's schools will submit data to the South Carolina Physical Education Assessment Program (SCPEAP). Each SC school will report to the SCPEAP every three years. The school's success or failure in meeting state standards will be disclosed on the school's report card.

Hopefully, the SC Student Health and Fitness Act is only the beginning of a concerted effort by the SC Legislature, the State Department of Education, schools, and physical education professionals to combat the epidemic of overweight/obese, diabetic and heart disease issues being observed in the children and youth of South Carolina and the nation.

Dr. Hohn is Physical Education Emeriti Faculty at USC's College of Education and currently Administrator for SCPEAP

*Find out more about the
Student Health and
Fitness Act by watching:*

**Council Update -
"Student Health and
Fitness Act, 2005"
on streaming video
at
www.ed.sc.edu/sic.
The videotape is
also
available for loan
from the SC-SIC
offices.**

Do You Know A Winner?

Apply for the Riley Award - Join the SIC Honor Roll!

Every school applying for the 2007 *Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award* now has the opportunity to land a place on the SIC Honor Roll! The 2007 application is nearly identical to last year's application except that schools earning 55 out of 65 points in Level One of the competition will be recognized as Honor Roll School Improvement Councils. Honor Roll SICs will receive a special certificate from SC-SIC acknowledging their outstanding effort in building an effective School Improvement Council. The Honor Roll list will be announced in a variety of media. Up to 20 Honor Roll SICs will be chosen as semi-finalists for the Riley Award.

Download the 2007 Riley Award application at www.ed.sc.edu/sic or call 800-868-2232 to have a copy faxed or mailed. The deadline for submission of Level One applications is November 15, 2006.



Students to be Awarded for Entrepreneurial Spirit

The SC Council on Economic Education is seeking nominations for the Merrill Lynch Young Entrepreneur Award. The award recognizes five young people who have started their own businesses and demonstrated a clear understanding of the costs and benefits of working for themselves. Middle or high school students in South Carolina actively involved in their own business may be nominated. The five award winners will receive a \$200 cash prize and be interviewed by ETV at their place of business. Their interviews will be featured on ETV's Stock Market Program and shown at the South Carolina Council on Economic Education's annual awards banquet in April, where the winners will be honored guests. Anyone may nominate a young entrepreneur - friends, parents, teachers, or community members. The entrepreneurs may even nominate themselves. To learn more about the award or nominate a young person, visit <http://www.sceconomics.org>.

